

NR LISTED

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SEP 27 1996

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

AHPP

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1. Name of Property

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Historic Name: Beisel-Mitchell House

Other Name/Site Number: GE 0055

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2. Location

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Street & Number: 420 W. Court St.

Not for Publication: N/A

City/Town: Paragould

Vicinity: N/A

State: AR

County: Greene

Code: AR 055

Zip Code: 72450

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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County and State

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification
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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. _____ See continuation sheet

Cathryn H. Sater _____ 8-8-96
Signature of certifying official Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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5. National Park Service Certification
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I, hereby certify that this property is:

- _____ entered in the National Register _____
_____ See continuation sheet.
- _____ determined eligible for the _____
National Register _____
_____ See continuation sheet.
- _____ determined not eligible for the _____
National Register _____
- _____ removed from the National Register _____
- _____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

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6. Function or Use

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Historic: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling

Current : Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification:

Spanish Colonial Revival

Materials: foundation: stucco roof: ceramic tile
walls: stucco other: wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

Summary

Located at 420 West Court Street in Paragould, the Beisel-Mitchell House is a two-story Spanish Colonial Revival-style residence with a partial basement that was built in 1930. The L-shaped house is constructed upon a continuous, stucco-clad concrete foundation that supports a cypress frame, which is covered with white stucco. The low-pitched gable roof is sheathed with regularly laid, straight barrel-type, red clay tiles. The interior is largely unaltered and features a ceramic tile fireplace surround imprinted with Mayan hieroglyphics. Modern alterations to the house consist primarily of some window replacement, the extension and addition of a gable-roof on the garage, and the installation of a swimming pool in the courtyard.

Elaboration

Located at 420 West Court Street in Paragould, the Beisel-Mitchell House is a two-story Spanish Colonial Revival-style residence with a partial basement that was built in 1930. The L-shaped house is constructed upon a continuous, stucco-clad concrete foundation that supports a cypress frame, which is covered with white stucco. The low-pitched gable roof is sheathed with regularly laid, straight barrel-type, red clay tiles. There is an exterior, tucco-covered chimney on the eastern gable end elevation and an interior

stuccoed chimney projecting from the southern slope of the one-story living room. Both chimneys feature stuccoed roofs.

The front, or northern, elevation consists of the two-story section to the east and the single-story living room section to the west. A curvilinear concrete sidewalk provides access from the street and leads to the front of the living room where a short wrought-iron gate enters a slightly raised concrete patio. The patio extends the length of the living room and is surrounded by a short stuccoed wall. The living room on this elevation is fenestrated by two fully glazed, arched double-leaf entrances that have since been enclosed by storm windows. A star-shaped porch light is mounted on the wall between the doors. The principal entrance to the house is positioned to the east of the patio and enters into the two-story section. This entrance bay consists of an arched, single-leaf wood-panelled door that is recessed under a small clay-tiled, shed-roof projection.

The two-story section is essentially divided into two bays with the western section containing a second-story overhang. The first-story of this bay comprises the entrance foyer and is fenestrated by two unusual arched stained glass windows imported from Italy and constructed with the bottoms of different colored wine bottles. Original wrought-iron window grills protect these windows on the exterior. The overhanging second-story section is lighted by two dissimilar-sized aluminum-frame casement windows that have supplanted the original multiple-pane, wood casement windows. The actual window openings, however, have not been altered. A conventional two-story wall denotes the eastern bay of the two-story section of the front elevation. This bay is defined by a large, centrally placed, aluminum-frame casement window, which admits light into the first-story dining room, and a small second story balcony directly above. The balcony is supported by two wood brackets while a pair of turned-spindle posts, which are connected by a simple stick railing, brace the clay-tile shed roof that extends from the main roof. French doors provide access to the balcony from the second-story bedroom.

The eastern elevation is fenestrated by five randomly sized and positioned casement windows. The two first-story dining room windows are stained glass, while one of the original twelve-pane, double-hinged, wood-frame casement windows is located on the second floor. Another original casement window - four-pane, single-hinged - is positioned on the first story immediately to the south of the chimney. The gabled ell, which originally contained the servants' quarters, projects to the south along the east elevation of the house and is fenestrated by three small aluminum-frame replacement windows. Attached to the southern end of the gabled ell is the stuccoed garage. Originally capped with a flat roof and parapet, the garage was later extended a few feet to accommodate modern automobiles, and a composition-shingled, gable roof was added. At this time the clay tile roof of the servants' quarters was also replaced with composition shingles. The eastern and western walls of the garage are not fenestrated, and a modern roll-up garage door constitutes the southern elevation.

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The rear, or southern elevation of the property is comprised of a fenced courtyard with a modern swimming pool surrounded on two sides by the L-shaped house. The rear elevation of the single-story living room was originally an open, tiled-floor porch with three arched openings. It has since been enclosed with glass. The two-story section is fenestrated by various-sized aluminum-frame casement windows and one original four-pane, single-hinged casement window. The western elevation of the servant's quarters contains a full-length, clay-tile, shed-roof porch supported by three square wood columns with decorative capitals. Underneath the porch is a single-leaf entrance into the ell, an aluminum-frame window, and an entrance into the garage. The western elevation of the living room contains a large, nonhistoric, multiple-pane arched window.

Perhaps the most striking interior component is the living room wood-burning fireplace with a brown ceramic tile surround that was imported from Mexico. The tile is imprinted with Mayan hieroglyphics that supposedly depict the gathering of grain. The living room also contains an eleven-foot arched ceiling. Most of the doorways throughout the house are also arched. Other original interior details include a star-shaped light fixture in the foyer, an Art Nouveau-style light fixture in the breakfast room, a wrought-iron chandelier in the kitchen, and the upstairs bathroom fixtures.

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8. Statement of Significance
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: local.

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1930

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Branum, Sax. (builder)

state significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above:

Summary

The Beisel-Mitchell House is being nominated under Criterion C with local significance as an excellent example of a Spanish Colonial Revival style residence in Paragould.

Elaboration

The community of Paragould was founded in 1882 when the Texas and St. Louis Railroad crossed lines with the St. Louis, Iron Mountain, and Southern Railroad in southeastern Greene County. The Texas and St. Louis was chartered in east Texas in 1877 by a former Confederate officer, J. P. Douglas, to facilitate faster transportation and a wider market for the products of his fruit orchards. Douglas made arrangements with the owners of the Iron Mountain Railroad and began construction of a narrow-gauge line called the Tyler Tap Line that would connect with the Iron Mountain at Texarkana. Unfortunately, construction setbacks and financial difficulties soon forced Douglas to cease work on the line and search for new financing.

In St. Louis, Douglas found a partner in Colonel James Paramore, a former Union officer from Ohio. Paramore operated the St. Louis Cotton Compress Company and was interested in securing direct transportation of Texas cotton to his mills in St. Louis. The Texas and St. Louis Railroad Company was formed, and Paramore was, somewhat surprisingly, able to obtain financial backing from several New York bankers. After the creditors were paid and construction resumed, Douglas left the nascent railroad to pursue other interests, and Paramore became president of the fledgling company. Unfortunately, before the Texas and St. Louis could connect with the Iron Mountain line in Texarkana, railroad mogul Jay Gould purchased the Iron Mountain and revoked all Texarkana traffic agreements made by the previous owners.

Without an outlet to a major line, the Tyler Tap Line was now useless, and Gould naturally expected that Paramore would have to sell his interests in the company or face bankruptcy. Paramore, however, rejected Gould's offer and started construction of an independent line, as far away from the Gould lines as possible, through Arkansas and Missouri to Cairo, Illinois. Gould, determined to break Paramore at all costs, ordered his railroad to cross the lines of the Texas and St. Louis whenever possible, thereby dividing the business Paramore expected to receive. In Greene County, the two lines arrived, almost simultaneously, at the site of present day Paragould in 1882. Myrl Rhine Mueller noted in her *A History of Greene County, Arkansas* that ". . . a silver spike was not driven at this juncture."

The fierce competition between Paramore and Gould ensured the success of the future town, for the area now had complete transportation facilities in all

Directions. In her book, Mueller described the origin of the new town's name:

In searching for a suitable name to submit to the Post Office for the proposed town, a group of citizens, led by Dr. Edrington, came up with the idea of coining a unique and original name honoring the presidents of the two railroads who had played leading roles in a classic railroad drama. By combining syllables from each of the names, Para-Gould was invented and accepted by the Post Office in July, 1882.

Mueller goes on to note that Gould "pettishly" refused to use the new name for his station because he resented having his name linked with that of Paramore; moreover, his name had been relegated to the last syllable. The Iron Mountain used the name of Parmley for several years on their station and schedules until the resultant confusion among arriving passengers finally became too much for the company to ignore. The hyphenation of the two syllables was also dropped at some point in the early years of the town. Paragould was incorporated on March 3, 1883.

The new community grew quickly, and in 1884 a campaign was initiated to move the county seat from Gainesville, which had held that honor since 1840, to Paragould. This issue bitterly divided not only the residents of Gainesville but the entire county as well. After months of bitter controversy, a referendum was held in September, 1884, in which the Paragould faction won by narrow margin, 943 to 707.

By 1920, Paragould had grown into a thriving town of 6,306 people. Greene County's vibrant timber industry, which was made possible by the transportation afforded by its two railroads (known at this time as the Missouri Pacific and the St. Louis and Southwestern or "Cotton Belt"). The town could boast of four banks, two department stores (one containing three stories), two newspapers, a pressed brick factory, a tile factory, an ice and cold storage plant, a flour mill, two spoke factories, three cotton gins, the Missouri Pacific railroad shops, a post office, an 800-seat theater, a telephone exchange, and other assorted businesses. Paragould also claimed one of the finest hotels in Arkansas in the Vandervoort. In light of the town's prosperity, the Chamber of Commerce proudly adopted as its slogan the epithet "You'll like Paragould."

Residential architecture in Paragould followed much the same pattern as other similar-sized towns in Arkansas. The early architectural record of the town consisted primarily of Plain Traditional structures along with several Victorian-era high-style residences, including the Queen Anne-styled Jackson-Herget House (NR 7/24/92). During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Paragould became exposed to the various nationally popular styles of architecture such as the Prairie, Craftsman, and American Foursquare movements. In addition to the previous styles which were still being constructed, the 1920's introduced the period revival style phase to Paragould. From 1920 through the 1930's, a fair number of houses were constructed with varying degrees of interpretation of the English Revival and

Italian Renaissance/Mediterranean styles along with at least one French Eclectic-style home.

In 1930, the nominated structure was constructed by Sax Branum for E. N. Beisel, who gave the house to his wife as a wedding gift. The date of construction is penciled on the bottom of a drawer in the upstairs bathroom with the inscription, "This house built for E. N. Bisel [sic] by Sax Branum and Painted by J. M. Alexander, D. B. Middleton and Clyde Eastman the year 1930." According to local tradition, the new two-story Spanish Colonial Revival-style residence was a replica of a similar house that the Beisels had seen on a visit to Mexico City. Beisel, who had moved to Paragould to manage a wood veneer mill, resided in his new house for only a few years before moving to Helena. The house was then purchased by Cecil Mitchell, later president of First National Bank, who lived there until his death in 1969.

Regardless of the origin of the style of the house, the Beisel-Mitchell House set the standard for a surprising number of Spanish Colonial Revival/Mission-style residences (and even one Pueblo Revival-esque style house) that were built in Paragould in the 1930's. With its stuccoed exterior, low-pitched clay tile roof, arched windows and entrances, wrought-iron window grills, second-story overhang, and hieroglyphic-adorned fireplace tile surround, the Beisel-Mitchell House is a textbook example of a Spanish Colonial Revival-style residence and arguably the best example of this style and type in Paragould. As such, it is being nominated under Criterion C with local significance.

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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Information submitted by John Kennett, February, 1996.

Mueller, Myrl Rhine. *A History of Greene County, Arkansas*. Little Rock, Arkansas: Parkhurst Book Design, 1984.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- _ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- _ previously listed in the National Register
- _ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- _ designated a National Historic Landmark
- _ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- _ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

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Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreage of Property: Less than one

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>726010</u>	<u>3992860</u>	B	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
C	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	D	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Verbal Boundary Description:

The East 80 feet of Block 27 of Pruett's Second Addition to the City of Paragould, Arkansas, also described as Lot 1 of Block 27 of the Subdivision of Blocks 23 and 27 of Pruett's Second Addition as shown by a plat of record in New Plat Book No. 1, Page 86 of the records of Greene County, Arkansas. ALSO, the West 4 feet of Block 23 of Pruett's Second Addition, also described as the West 4 feet of Lot 2 of Block 23 of the Subdivision of Blocks 23 and 27 of Pruett's Second Addition.

Boundary Justification:

This boundary includes all of the property historically associated with the Beisel-Mitchell House.

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11. Form Prepared By
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Name/Title: Patrick Zollner, Architectural Historian

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: August 8, 1996

Street & Number: 1500 Tower Bldg., 323 Center St. Telephone: (501) 324-9880

City or Town: Little Rock State: AR ZIP: 72201

